

et certaines éponges, dont l'axis de quelques spécimens du Japon se présente couvert par places, les modestes fabricants de ces admirables produits.

Quoique l'hypothèse du parasitisme des polypes soit aujourd'hui en faveur, soutenue qu'elle est par de grandes autorités scientifiques, les résultats de mes observations sur les spécimens du Portugal me semblent plus favorables à l'hypothèse contraire.

Sans vouloir m'engager pour le moment dans une discussion qui exige de grands développements, je demande la permission d'énoncer quelques faits bien constatés, et qui me semblent de quelque valeur.

1°. La cohabitation ou l'existence simultanée sur le même axis de polypes et d'éponges, qu'on a remarquée sur quelques spécimens du Japon, n'a pas lieu sur aucun des exemplaires du Portugal.

2°. Chez ces derniers le *corium polypigerum* enveloppe l'axis d'une manière uniforme ; il recouvre parfaitement l'une des extrémités de l'axis, la plus étroite, et de là il s'étend sans aucune interruption jusqu'aux $\frac{2}{5}$ ou les $\frac{2}{3}$ de la longueur totale. Les polypes placés sur l'extrémité de l'axis sont les plus petits de tous.

3°. Le *corium polypigerum* et les polypes sont formés de plusieurs tissus en couches superposées, dans lesquels on trouve une quantité très-considérable de spicules silicieux, dont les caractères morphologiques varient pour chaque couche.

4°. L'aspect granuleux, chagriné, que présente la surface extérieure du *corium* et des polypes n'est pas le résultat d'une simple incrustation de détritrus de sable (comme on l'affirme pour les individus du Japon), mais il est dû à la présence d'un nombre infini de spicules réguliers, en forme de massue et hérissés de pointes. Ces spicules font partie intégrante de la couche la plus extérieure ou tégumentaire.

5°. Chaque polype est soutenu par une charpente silicieuse de spicules filiformes, disposés longitudinalement et à intervalles égaux sur la paroi interne de la cavité du corps.

8. DESCRIPTIONS OF FOUR NEW SPECIES OF BIRDS FROM EASTERN ASIA. By JOHN GOULD, F.R.S., ETC.

NECTARINIA (ARACHNECHTHRA) INSIGNIS, Gould.

Crown of the head deep shining green ; shoulders, wing-coverts, rump, and upper tail-coverts shining green, tinged with purple ; a narrow line down each side of the throat, breast, and abdomen rich glossy blue, tinged with purple ; chin and centre of the throat rich purplish red ; on each side of the breast a tuft of rich gamboge-yellow feathers ; nape and back deep velvety black ; primaries and secondaries glossy brownish black ; tail rounded at the end, of a deep bluish black, some of the outer feathers narrowly margined externally with shining green ; lower part of the abdomen, thighs, and under tail-coverts deep black ; flanks smoke-grey ; bill and feet black.

Total length $14\frac{3}{4}$ inches, bill $1\frac{3}{8}$, wing $2\frac{3}{8}$, tail $2\frac{1}{8}$, tarsi $\frac{5}{8}$.

Hab. Penang.

Remark. The fine adult male of this beautiful species now in my possession formed part of a collection of birds made at Penang. In size it is intermediate between *Nectarinia (Arachnechthra) lotenia* and *N. (A.) asiatica*, from both of which it differs in the green colouring of its crown and in the beautiful purple tint of the breast and abdomen.

OTOCOMPSA FUSCICAUDATA, Gould.

Forehead, crown, crest, occiput, and sides of the head brownish black; below the posterior portion of the eye a small tuft of bright blood-red feathers, and below this a large oval-shaped spot of white bordered with black; upper surface of the body and wings light olivaceous brown; tail uniform fuscous; on each side of the neck an irregular crescentic mark of blackish brown, the two nearly meeting on the centre of the chest; chin and throat white; abdomen and under surface of the shoulder creamy-white, washed with light olivaceous brown on the flanks; under tail-coverts scarlet; bill and feet brownish black.

Total length 7 inches, bill $\frac{7}{8}$, wing $3\frac{3}{8}$, tail $3\frac{3}{8}$, tarsi $\frac{7}{8}$.

Hab. The southern portion of the peninsula of India.

Remark. This species, which is very common in many parts of the Madras Presidency, appears to have been hitherto undescribed. It differs from the *O. emeria* of Bengal, the *O. jocosa* of China, and all the other species of the genus with which I am acquainted in the uniform colouring of the tail.

I had been led to believe that it might be identical with the bird of this form described and figured in Sonnerat's 'Voyage to China;' but I find that this is not the case, the bird there represented and described having the tail-feathers conspicuously tipped with white.

ENICURUS GUTTATUS, Gould.

On the forehead a large spot of white; head, neck, throat, and breast deep black; at the nape and down the sides of the neck a series of silky white feathers, narrowly bordered with black; upper half of the back black, with a small round spot of white at the tip of each feather; lower half of the back and upper tail-coverts white; wings black, the tips of the greater coverts and the bases of the secondaries white, forming a band across the wing, innermost secondaries also tipped with white; primaries dark brown; two lateral tail-feathers white, the remainder black, tipped with white; lower half of the abdomen and under tail-coverts white; bill black; tarsi and toes fleshy-white.

Total length $8\frac{1}{2}$ inches, bill $\frac{7}{8}$, wing $3\frac{3}{4}$, tail 7, tarsi 1.

Hab. Sikim?

This species must not be confounded with the *Enicurus maculatus*, to which it is very nearly allied; for it differs from that bird in having a much shorter and smaller tail, in having a round spot instead of a crescentic mark of white at the tip of each of the feathers of the mantle, and in the spot on the forehead being of less size.

